

Chief, Economic Research Area

29 September 1958

Chief, Services Division

Documentation of ERA Reports

REFERENCE: Your Memorandum of 25 September 1958

1. I discussed the above subject in considerable detail with all of the branch chiefs and section chiefs of the Division on 8 September and have subsequently had an opportunity on several occasions to discuss it with analysts in the Division.

2. I have been able to enlist no sentiment for the removal of all documentation from the reports, i.e., other than a characterization of the sources in an appendix. As a result of detailed explanation on my part of what I considered the editing and production problem associated with the documentation, I was able to secure some general agreement to the notion that it would be possible to reduce the number of footnotes in research papers rather sharply. Those who could be weaned to such an agreement rather universally held the opinion that restricted footnoting would only be feasible if references such as you indicate in paragraph two of your memorandum were used liberally throughout the report.

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3. Inasmuch as this reaction was substantially at odds with all of the proposals discussed at the staff meeting, except that suggested by [REDACTED] I inquired at some length into the rationale for this sort of position on the part of the members of the Division. The following reactions are characteristic not of isolated individual reactions, but of generally expressed sentiment. Frequently we have had several or all of these reactions being expressed by each individual.

a. The present form of documentation in ORR reports has been one of the principal vehicles in securing the rather wide authority and recognition our reports have in the intelligence community.

b. This documentation has made possible a wider use of principal sources internally and has had a strong evangelical influence in securing additional depth to the research conducted in other parts of the intelligence community.

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c. Combined analysis of the text and documentation of published research has made possible a quicker and easier evaluation of the authority of the content.

d. Almost all individuals mentioned that the necessity to contact the producing branch and check detailed references in which they might be interested would add seriously to the amount of work on individual research projects. It would likewise substantially increase the effort necessary to assess the reliability of certain conclusions expressed in reports in which they had an interest.

4. I received the sense, as a result of these conversations, that extensive documentation of ERA reporting has been a powerful contributing device in developing generally accepted intelligence among the analysts both within and without the Area. Moreover, I got the distinct feeling that abandonment of documentation in the body of the report might seriously erode the maintenance of present levels of research achievement. Many people insisted that, even were they to substantially reduce the present level of documentation in an effort to accommodate the editing and publishing difficulties which I outlined, they would want to use relatively comprehensive documentation initially and work toward a moderation of the documentation in the finished (published) report.

5. One suggestion which I received which has some merit, although it should be pursued further certainly, was that we might adopt the form of notation or citation frequently used in psychological research. This form consists of citing the documents by number with paging reference set at the original citation and the documents being subsequently numbered and placed at the appendix. At least, this system would have the virtue of eliminating the frequent citation of the same report with different, or occasionally even the same, page reference in several places in the documentary appendix.

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